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RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 4755  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5968  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 2332  
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 0065  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 4103  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 3805  
RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KATHMANDU 000391

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS PREPARE FOR A WILD  
RIDE

Classified By: Ambassador Nancy J. Powell. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

1. (SBU) An estimated 745 international observers from 28 missions, including large delegations from the European Union, Carter Center, and the Asian Network for Free Elections, are taking position across Nepal to observe the April 10 Constituent Assembly election. Most of the international observers plan to focus their efforts in the Kathmandu Valley and in the Terai. The Election Commission has urged observers to limit negative reporting. Threats from the Communist Party of Nepal - Maoist cannot be completely ignored. Observers from several NGOs and diplomatic missions, including the U.S., are coordinating their efforts. A coalition of civil society organizations has highlighted logistical and security challenges observers could face. Post provided observation training through the National Democratic Institute (NDI) the week of March 31 to American, other diplomatic, and local staff who will head to the field or work in post's election operations center.

EC Accredits 28 International Observer Missions

2. (SBU) The Election Commission (EC) has accredited 28 international missions offering an estimated 745 observers for the April 10 Constituent Assembly (CA) election. The European Union (EU) has the largest delegation with 125 long-term and short-term observers. Rounding out the top tier in terms of numbers are the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) with 100 observers, the South Asia Forum for Fair Elections with 80 observers, and the Carter Center with 60 observers. Among the 11 accredited diplomatic missions in Nepal, Japan and Britain will have the greatest numbers across the country on election day, with approximately 37 and 26 observers respectively. (Note: Post expects to send 18 American staff and an equal number of LES interpreters to polling stations, not including local staff returning to their home districts to vote. End note.) Japan expects a team of approximately two dozen observers from Tokyo, according to Takayuki Kawakami, the political affairs officer from the Japanese Embassy. Jemima Gordon-Duff, a

political officer from the British Embassy, told Emboffs on March 18 that five British members of Parliament are slated to accompany staff from her embassy and the UK Department for International Development.

#### Observers Focused on Kathmandu Valley and Terai

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13. (C) Discussions with contacts at other missions indicate that most international observers will concentrate in the Kathmandu Valley and Terai. The Carter Center and ANFREL will have the most thorough coverage of the international missions. At a coordination meeting at the Election Commission on March 18, Carter Center field director Darren Nance announced the Carter Center plans to have observers in 26 districts. (Note: Nance previously had told the Ambassador that, in addition to the Carter Center's long-term observers already traveling through Nepal, 45 short-term observers will arrive in three waves beginning in early April. President Carter and the leadership team will be in Nepal April 7-13. End note.) A representative from ANFREL said his organization, with support from The Asia Foundation, would send 60 percent of its 80 short-term observers to the Terai, some remaining for up to nine days after the election. ANFREL already has 20 long-term observers in all five development regions of Nepal. The Asia Foundation will post 15 of its own observers around the Kathmandu Valley.

#### Election Commission Discouraging Negative Reports...

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14. (C) Peter Erben, the country director for IFES, told the KATHMANDU 00000391 002 OF 003

Ambassador April 4 that the EC has urged observers, primarily domestic but also international, not to publish reports too critical of the ongoing pre-electoral violence. The Chief Election Commissioner was particularly disapproving of ANFREL's public assessments but seemed unwilling to tackle the more prominent Carter Center. Erben said the Chief Election Commissioner appeared to want the election to happen at any cost, so rather than risk allegations of impartiality by forcing Maoists and other parties to abide by the Code of Conduct, the EC would put the onus on the observers not to draw attention to violence. Erben opined that the Commissioner seemed mistaken about his role and had no right to tell observers what to report. The Ambassador commented that if the EC forced observers to censor their words now, post-election reports would be that much more negative.

#### ...But Responding To Concerns About Observers' Safety

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15. (C) The EC on April 5 issued an appeal to all sides to respect international observers as guests of the GON. The EC statement asked "all the concerned individuals to extend their sincere cooperation to carry on the duties of observers without creating any obstructions in words or acts/behaviors." The appeal followed private requests by the Ambassador, among others, that the EC take seriously Maoist chairman Pushpa Dahal's public statement at an election rally on April 2 in which he reportedly talked about "expelling" international observers, Americans in particular.

#### Observers Discuss Coordination

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16. (C) On March 27, all participants at a second international observer coordination dinner hosted by Dominic Cardy, county director of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), agreed the election would not be wholly free and fair because of the current pre-election environment and persistent acts of political violence. (Note: The British Embassy hosted the first coordination dinner on March 13. End note.) The observers from various NGOs and diplomatic missions were still unclear as to what actions and events

would be considered acceptable to give the election an overall positive assessment. Emboffs were far more concerned than officers from other missions, particularly the European Union, about Maoist and Young Communist League (YCL) violence, display of arms, intimidation, and obstruction of other parties' rallies. Other diplomats countered that all of the parties had been engaged in inappropriate behavior, but conceded that perhaps Maoist infractions had been a bit more numerous. Fida Nasrallah, the Chief Election Adviser to the UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), said the EC was considering imposing fines on parties for Code of Conduct violations. She viewed this as a positive step, but admitted that bills the EC had sent to parties for electoral graffiti removal had not yet been paid. At a subsequent dinner hosted by the DCM, observers from ANFREL, the Asia Foundation, IFES, NDI, the Carter Center, UNMIN, EU, and Australian, British, Japanese, and Danish embassies all agreed to communicate with each other on election day, as well as during the days preceding and following the election.

#### Civil Society Discusses Observation Challenges

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17. (U) At a seminar on April 1, the National Election Observation Committee (NEOC), which is a coalition of civil society organizations, underscored the importance of training, preparation, and coordination of observers. One presenter expressed concern that the majority of observers would cluster in urban areas and easily accessible polling centers rather than in remote or other high-risk areas likely to experience the most problems. The presenter warned that Maoist YCL and People's Liberation Army cadres who have left the cantonments, as well as armed Madhesi groups, could pose a threat to observers. NEOC added that police would have

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limited effectiveness in ensuring security because of inadequate manpower, poor training, and low morale.

#### Post's Observers Receive Training

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18. (U) On April 2, NDI provided training to roughly 30 of post's American staff, as well as a handful of Canadian and Australian diplomats, who will be serving as international election observers or working in post's election operation center. The two-hour program included a review of proper polling procedures, common problems, and a mock election. NDI held a similar training session for local staff on April 14. Post currently anticipates dispatching seven two-person teams outside the Kathmandu Valley April 9-11 and ten two-person teams for half-day shifts within the Valley on the day of the election.

#### Comment

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19. (C) We expect election day itself to be somewhat chaotic with conflicting news reports apt to surface. International observers -- including the bulk from post -- will remain clustered in Kathmandu because of logistical and security burdens. Those traveling to other districts will head primarily to the political hotspots in the Terai, which have the benefit of being easily accessible. Although Post will have a relatively limited observer presence outside of Kathmandu -- a presence we may further reduce depending on the security situation -- a fully-staffed operations center will keep in touch with contacts in the districts. The operations center will be functional from 0700-midnight local time on April 10 and 0900-2100 local time on April 11. The direct dial numbers for the operations center are 977-01-400-7296/7297 and 977-01-472-1873. Larger and more widely-dispersed delegations have agreed to provide extra eyes and ears and share information with post throughout election day. The greater challenge will occur in the days following the election, when we anticipate disputes to arise

over vote-counting. We also anticipate that some parties, particularly the Maoists, could take advantage of the period until the announcement of final results -- which may take up to a month or even longer -- to call into question the validity of the election if they do poorly and take to the streets.

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